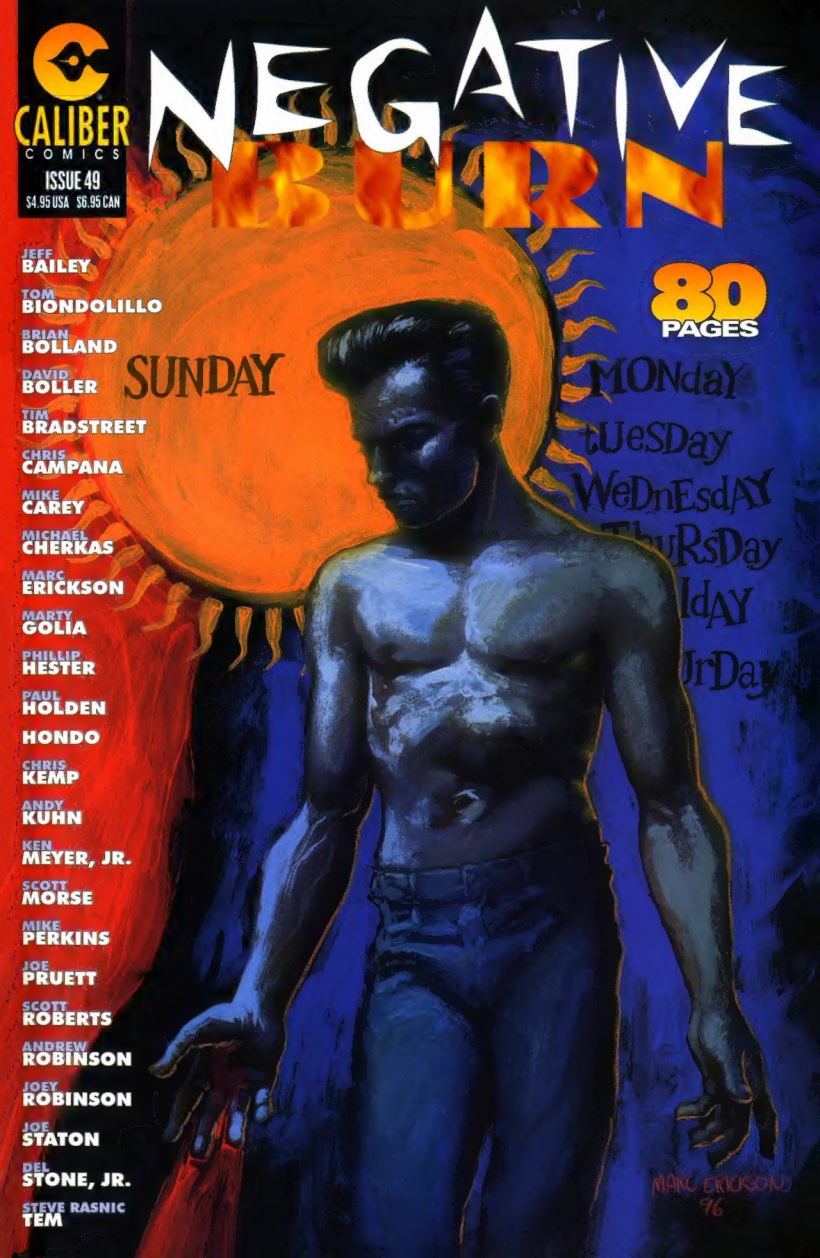
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SUNDAY
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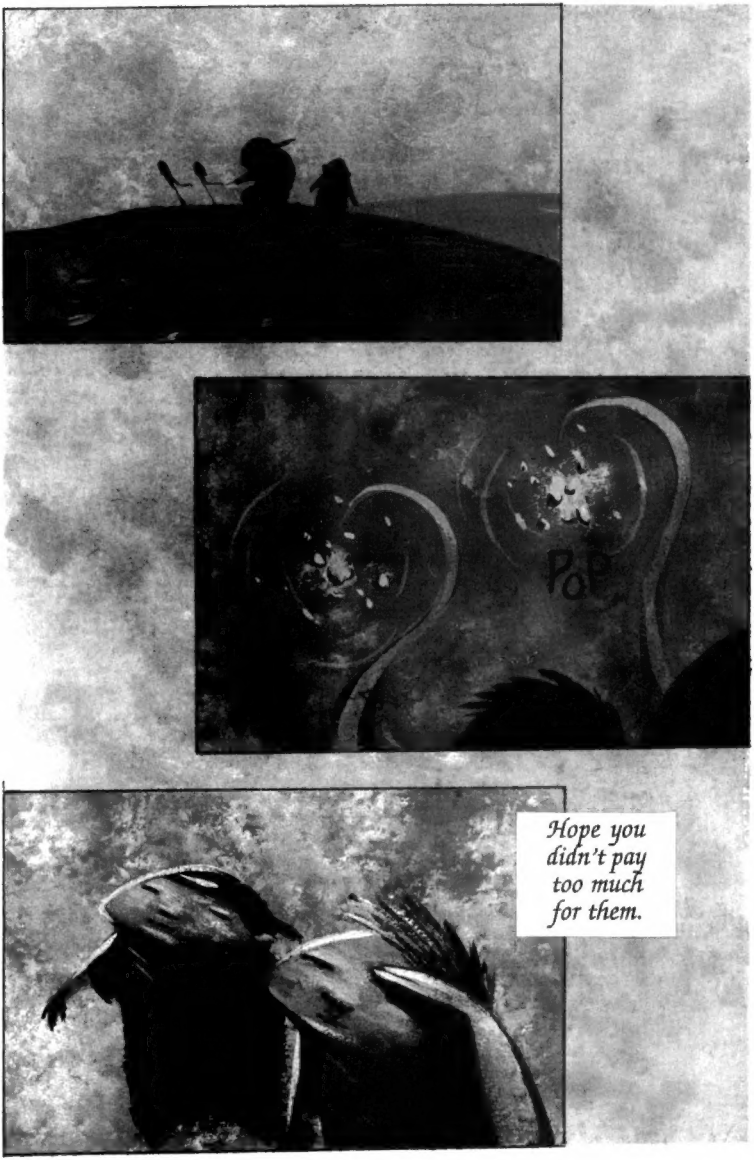
ALL ROBOT STYLE
HEY! Can ya play?

I got some bottlerockets, an' I heard the hill over by the creek's kinda washed out, onna counta th' rain.


POP
Hope you didn't pay too much for them.

So let's go see that washout.

Watch the edge...it might still give from the rain....

Holy shnikies.

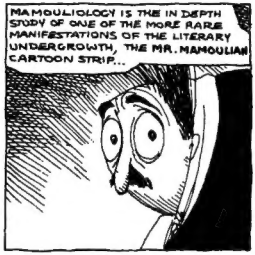
It's all robot style.
Let's go get a shovel from your dad.

....TO BE CONTINUED....

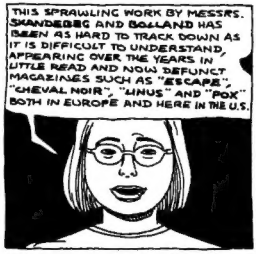
MR. MAMOULIAN
MAMOULIOLOGY

10.7 97 Ballard 52

MY NAME IS GLENDA BLATCH. I AM THE CURATOR OF OBSCURITIES AND PROFESSOR OF MAMOULIOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HARVARD.
THAT'S HARVARD, NEBRASKA, INCIDENTALLY.

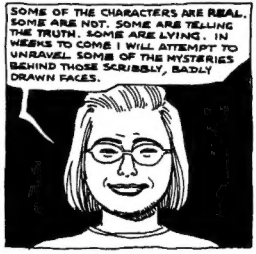

MAMOULIOLOGY IS THE IN DEPTH STUDY OF ONE OF THE MORE RARE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE LITERARY UNDERGROWTH, THE MR. MAMOULIAN CARTOON STRIP...

... THE INTRICACIES AND COMPLEXITIES OF WHICH HAVE OCCUPIED MY TIME OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS TO THE DETRIMENT OF ALMOST ALL OTHER ACTIVITIES INCLUDING HOBBIES, RELATIONSHIPS AND PERSONAL HYGIENE.


THIS SPRAWLING WORK BY MESSRS. SKANDEBERG AND BALLAND HAS BEEN AS HARD TO TRACK DOWN AS IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, APPEARING OVER THE YEARS IN LITTLE READ AND NOW DEFUNCT MAGAZINES SUCH AS "ESCAPE", "CHEVAL NOIR", "LINUS" AND "FOX" BOTH IN EUROPE AND HERE IN THE U.S.

MR. MAMOULIAN, THE STRIP, IS A DENSELY WRITTEN, SELF-REFERENCIAL AND OBSESSIVE CREATION OF VAGUE CULTURAL ALLUSIONS AND THEMES WHICH UNFOLD ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY YET SOMEHOW REMAIN REMOTE AND INTANGIBLE.

IN ITS MULTIBLE LAYERS OF REALITY/NON-REALITY IMAGINARY CHARACTERS IMAGINE THEIR OWN IMAGINARY CHARACTERS WHO, IN TURN, IMAGINE THEIR OWN IMAGINARY CHARACTERS, WHILE THE LINES BETWEEN EACH STRATA OF IMAGINARINESS OVERLAP, BLUR AND DISINTEGRATE.


SOME OF THE CHARACTERS ARE REAL. SOME ARE NOT. SOME ARE TELLING THE TRUTH. SOME ARE LYING. IN WEEKS TO COME I WILL ATTEMPT TO UNRAVEL SOME OF THE MYSTERIES BEHIND THOSE SCRIBBLY, BADLY DRAWN FACES.

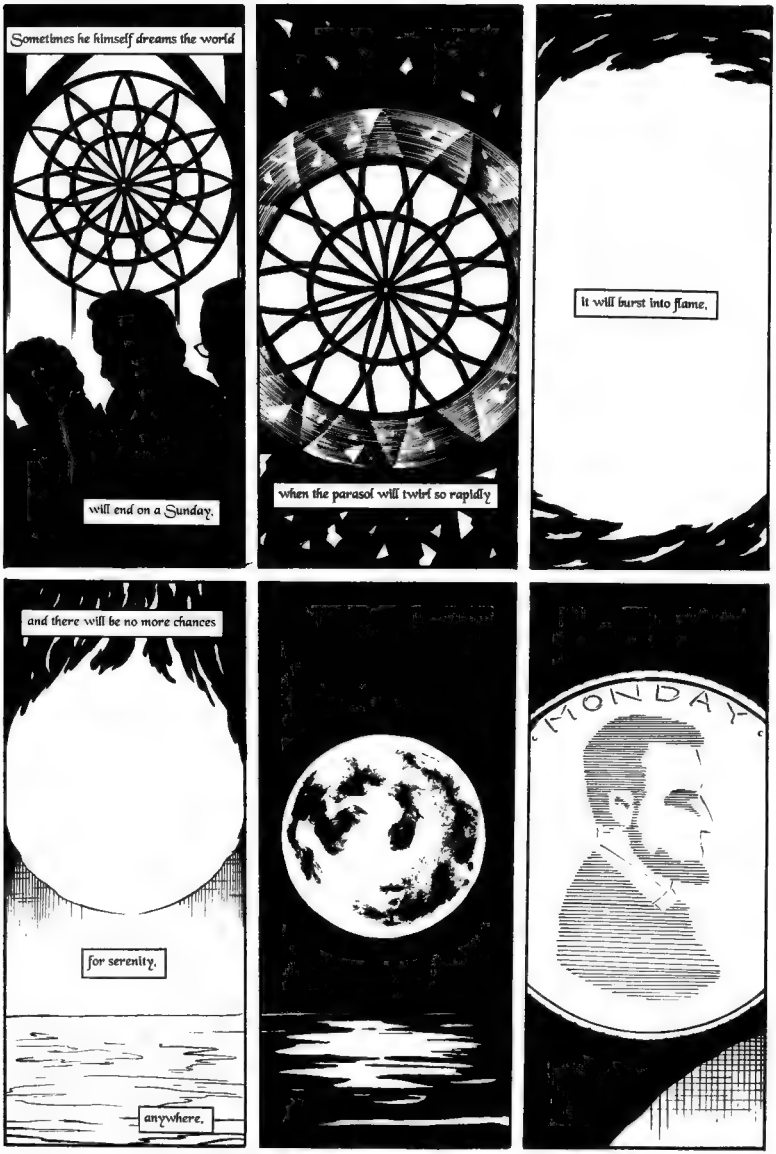
MY STUDENTS HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HARVARD, WHOSE NUMBERS REACH INTO THE... WELL, THREE, ACTUALLY... ALTHOUGH ONE WAS RECENTLY HAD A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN, AND ANOTHER HAS STILL TO RECOVER FROM A SERIOUS GARDENING ACCIDENT. THE THIRD, AND GRAHAM, IF YOU'RE OUT THERE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH... IS... ER...

... WHAT WAS I SAYING? I CAN'T REMEMBER. ANYWAY, MY COMMENTARIES AND ESSAYS ARE SOON TO BE COLLECTED IN BOOK FORM AND PUBLISHED UNDER THE NAME OF "MR. MAMOULIAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS."

PROFESSOR GLENDA BLATCH
DEPARTMENT OF MAMOULIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF HARVARD
#308 OCEAN VIEW
HARVARD
NEBRASKA
NE 32167
U.S.A.

SUNDAY
He does not recall any of those days
He likes to think that most of those first days
as being particularly sunny.
although he is sure
some of them must have been.
had been spent in quiet contemplation.

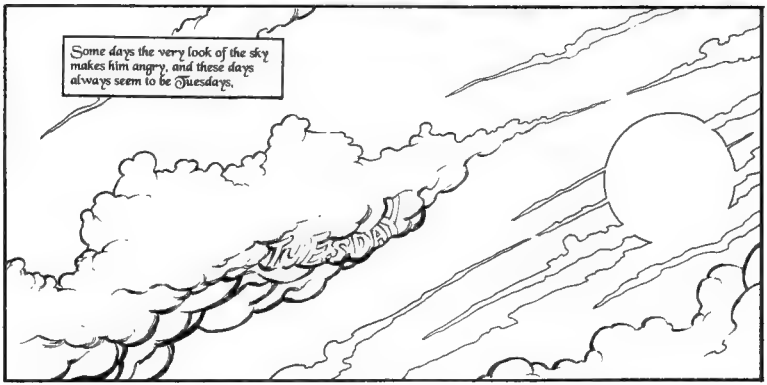
as he sprawled out with dogs and sheep
beneath the brilliant yellow-painted parasol
hanging serenely in the smoky sky.
Not too bright and not too dull,
what his mother always said
made for good husband material.
She had been irreverent in that way about most subjects,
even though people still considered her a good church-going lady.

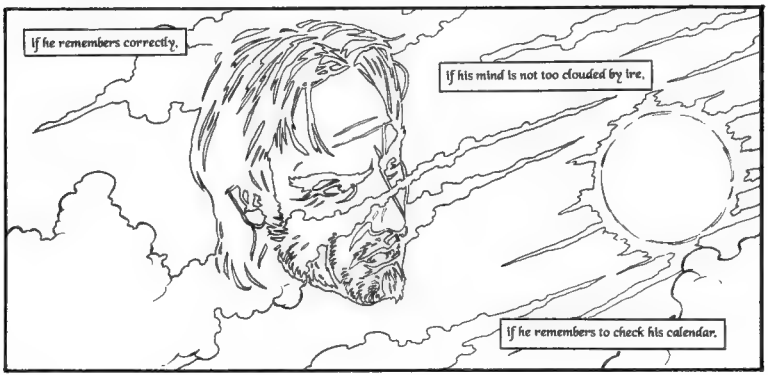

Sometimes he himself dreams the world
will end on a Sunday.
when the parasol will twirl so rapidly
it will burst into flame.
and there will be no more chances
for serenity.
anywhere.
MONDAY

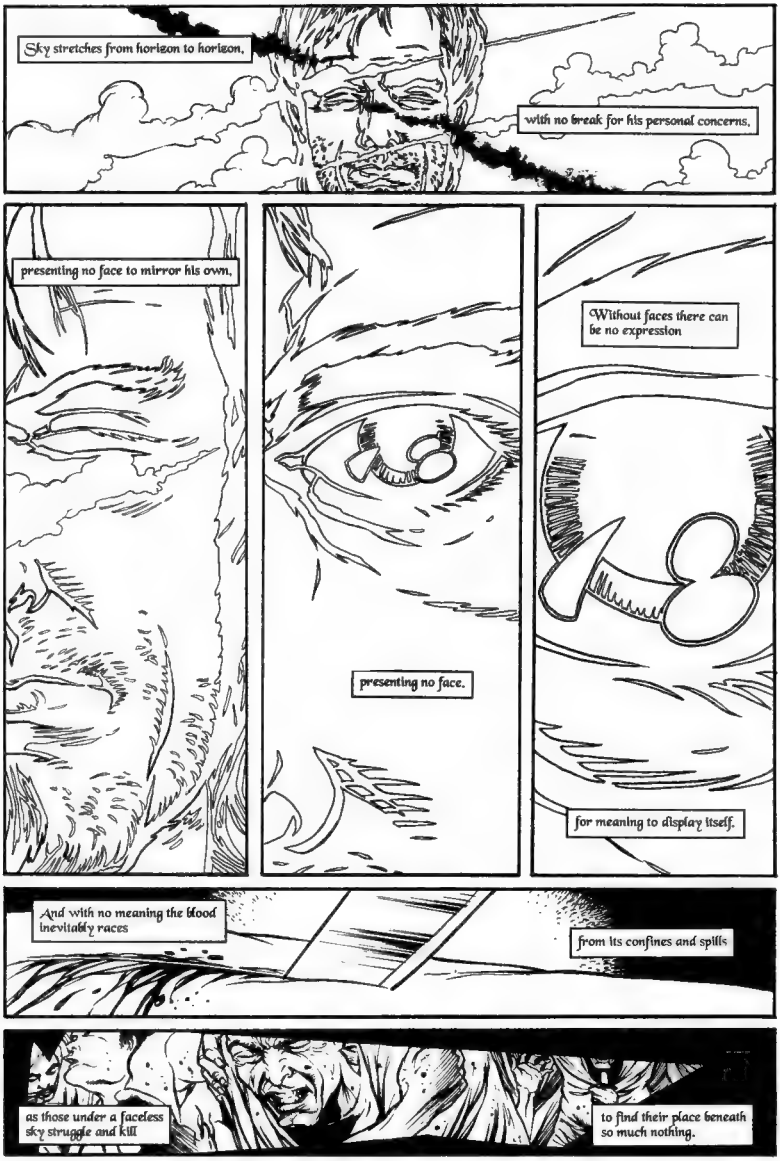
The moon is the coin
that pays his way out of dream, so that he might get up, shower, and make it to work on time.
For he is always up too early these days after Sunday.
He is always up when the moon is still up, his dreams interrupted, unprepared

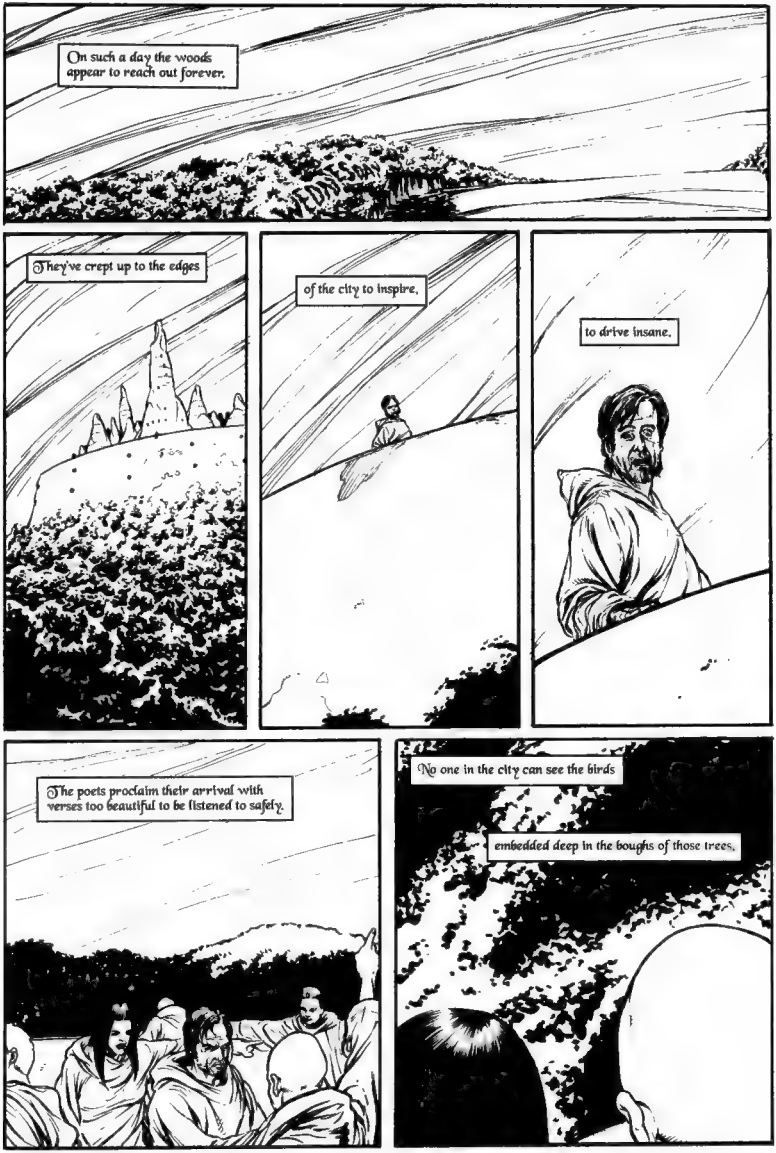
for the bright competition of this Monday moon, this moon of commerce.
The clink of silvered coins jangling in the box as he tries to steer his passengers clear of potholes.
But sometimes there is just no way around them.

or so he tells the moon.
But the moon never listens.


Some days the very look of the sky makes him angry, and these days always seem to be Tuesdays.
TUESDAY


If he remembers correctly.
If his mind is not too clouded by ire.
If he remembers to check his calendar.


Sky stretches from horizon to horizon,
with no break for his personal concerns,
presenting no face to mirror his own,
presenting no face.
Without faces there can be no expression
for meaning to display itself.
And with no meaning the blood inevitably races
from its confines and spills
as those under a faceless sky struggle and kill
to find their place beneath so much nothing.


On such a day the woods appear to reach out forever.
They've crept up to the edges
of the city to inspire,
to drive insane.
The poets proclaim their arrival with verses too beautiful to be listened to safely.
No one in the city can see the birds
embedded deep in the boughs of those trees.

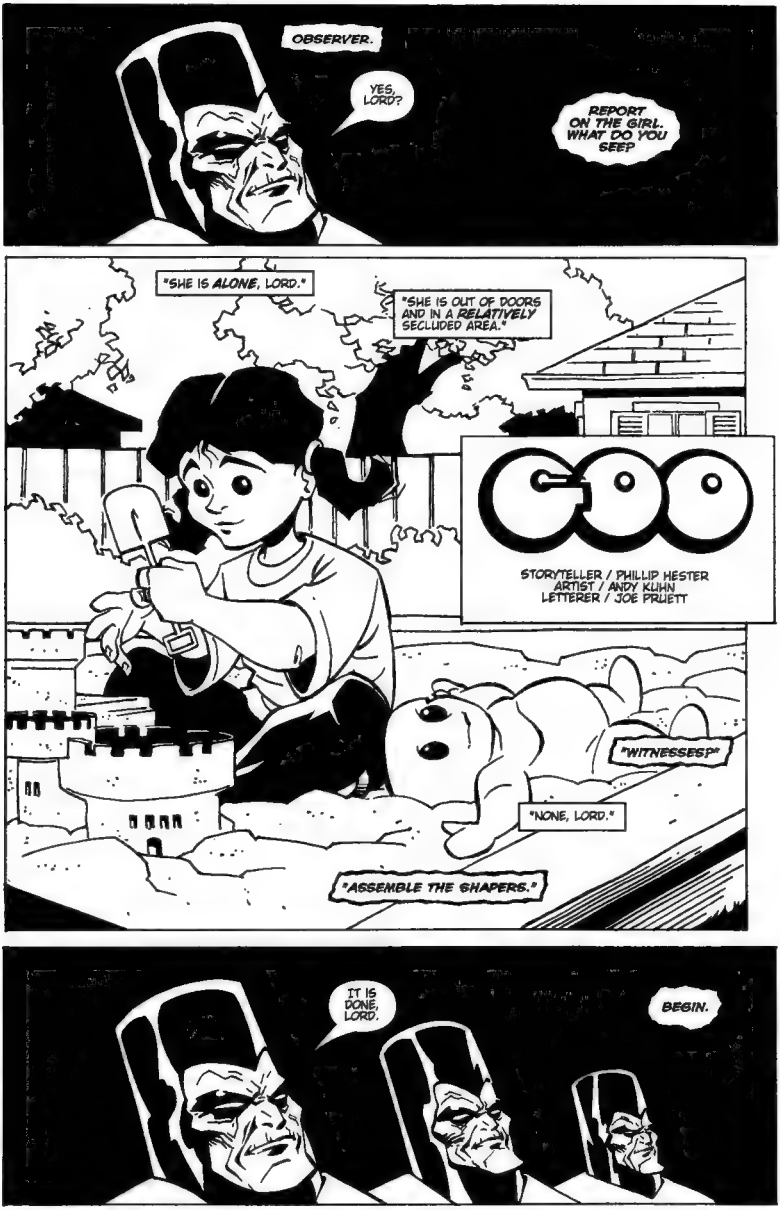
but everyone can hear them crying
The people in the city listen carefully
to the birds' prophetic cries,
arguing over messages and meanings,
convinced that by the next morning
the woods will have receded.

The sky has filled,
hanging low as the tops of buildings.
People run to the shelter of awnings and overhangs,
glancing up so frequently they run into the tall,
muscular men who have recently arrived in the city,
these men smashing arms and legs and skulls
indiscriminately,
with no word of explanation,
with no words.

The day is for falling in love,
FRIDAY
particularly for those men and women
desperate
for some peaceful place
for the weekend,
Men wander the streets and the soft sepia parks
looking for love,
looking for safety.
Even in the grip of some stranger's hands
seeking to tumble or maim

there is always the momentary perception
that one might be face to face
with a weekend's beloved.
Only with the next morning
will come the sense
it has all been illusion,
however safe.
SATURDAY
like all final days
It seems to have no end,

the very morning air of it
a potent narcotic
that makes one dance
even when the feet do not move,
that makes one circle strangers
all day without touching,
without even making eye contact,
until eventually the entire city rings itself
with itself,
and the sun comes down into bright red eyelids
filled with the ecstasy
of final movements everywhere.

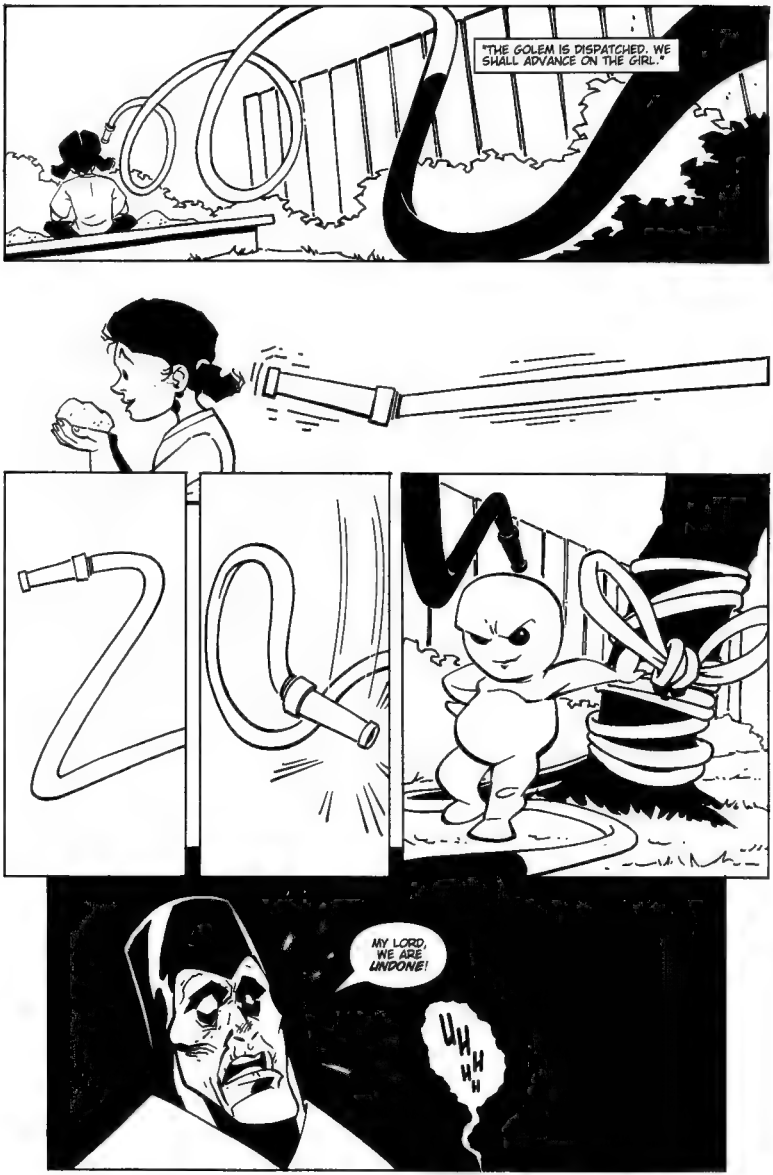

OBSERVER.
YES, LORD?
REPORT ON THE GIRL. WHAT DO YOU SEE?
"SHE IS ALONE, LORD."
"SHE IS OUT OF DOORS AND IN A RELATIVELY SECLUDED AREA."
GOO
STORYTELLER / PHILLIP HESTER
ARTIST / ANDY KUHN
LETTERER / JOE PRUETT
"WITNESSES?"
"NONE, LORD."
"ASSEMBLE THE SHAPERS."
IT IS DONE, LORD.
BEGIN.

ALL GOES WELL?
YES, LORD, BUT THE *SAND*, IT IS *DIFFICULT* TO SHAPE.

"WHAT TRANSPIRES?"
"MY LORD,... I..."
BOOT!
"SPEAK, FOOL. WHAT IS WRONG?"
"THERE SEEMS TO BE ANOTHER GOLEM NEAR THE GIRL."
"ANOTHER? ONE OF OURS?"

SHUMPF!
"NO, MY LORD..."
POP
"I DON'T BELIEVE SO."

MY LORD, A SHAPER FALLS. SHALL WE WITHDRAW?
"OF COURSE NOT. ADD YOUR STRENGTH TO THE REMAINING SHAPER. FORGET THE GIRL FOR NOW."
UHHH
"DESTROY THE GOLEM!"
SPOTT!


"THE GOLEM IS DISPATCHED. WE SHALL ADVANCE ON THE GIRL."
MY LORD, WE ARE UNDONE!
UHHHH

WITHDRAW OBSERVER. REGAIN YOUR STRENGTH, THEN SEE TO YOUR FALLEN COMRADES.
THERE WILL BE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE THE GIRL.
MANY OPPOR-TUNITIES.
GOO, YOU SILLY DOLL. HOW DID YOU GET OVER THERE?
GOO?
END!

OBJECT D'ART

by Del Stone Jr.

"He must not know," Pamela told the gentleman, who slipped her an avaricious smile, then smoothed it into something more practiced and civilized.

"I assure madame, he will not," the gentleman answered. He was older, his Tuscanny suit hanging on him like a flag wrapped around a flagpole, his silk tie squeezing his head into a marsupial funnel of angular gristle and teeth.

But Pamela didn't care. All that mattered was that she acquire the painting.

The last Brookenstein original.

"Our transactions are conducted in complete discretion," the gentleman told her. "Mr. Brookenstein will not know it was you." He fidgeted a moment, then asked, "And how will madame be making the arrangements…"

"Cash," Pamela told him, opening her handbag. She withdrew a sheath of $1,000 bills and counted out 10. She folded and inserted them, as she might a business card, in the gentleman's breast pocket. "Have it taken downstairs," she said, turning and crossing the room. "It should fit in the trunk of the Ferrari.

And she was gone.

* * *

Brookenstein had not visited Pamela's flat in years. He will be astonished at the changes, she thought, as her assistant, Miss Deppler, showed the artist into the gathering room.

"Ah, Pammie," Brookenstein said munificently as he spotted her, spreading his arms as if to gather her in. When she did not rise form the wingback, he lowered his arms and said, "Good to see you again."

Pamela nodded. Brookenstein had not changed—oh, the cheeks pooched a bit and the gut spread to his waist, but other than that he hadn't changed, she remembered with a shudder.

"Your invitation caught me off guard," he said. "I thought I was persona non grata hereabouts."

She offered him a thin smile. "After you abandoned me?"

Brookenstein effected shock. "After I taught you the exigencies of business?" he gasped. "Which I had heard, and now see, that you've put to good effect? What's your net worth, Pammie? Ten mil? Twenty?

"I loved you," she said evenly.

"As I loved you," he answered. "But I also loved art, and what better lesson could I teach you than the suffering any real artist must bear in pursuit of his vocation?"

Pamela motioned to Miss Deppler, who twisted a rheostat. The lights revealed framed paintings affixed to the walls… and a five-gallon can of gasoline.

Brookenstein's eyes traveled the walls. "My paintings…" He touched a finger to his lips. "All of my paintings. The extent of my creative output since I began selling professionally.

"Touching." His gaze settled on the can, and his eyes brightened. "I understand now. You bought my work, then brought me here to witness its destruction. A flair for irony."

Pamela arched an eyebrow.

"But it won't work," he said casually. "You own it; do with it what you wish. I am a creator. I will create."

"You are a creator," Pamela whispered slyly. "And I am a businesswoman. A wealthy businesswoman. No, Brookenstein, I don't plan to destroy your creations. I plan to sell them."

Brookenstein paused, a frown beginning to congeal.

"I plan to sell them as labels on products my company produces, Brookenstein…cans of baked beans, and disposable diapers, and children's toys…"

"What…" His face had gone the color of overdone sausage.

"And no matter what you 'create,' I will be there to purchase it," Pamela went on smoothly, "and bring it to the art-starved masses, plastered across a can of spray deodorant…"

"I am an artist!" Brookenstein screamed at her. "You bourgeois, impercipient Capitalist! I am an ARTIST, NOT a day laborer in some graphics art factory!"

"Yes," Pamela told him, "and as an artist, you must suffer."

Brookenstein's eyes darted rat-like about the room. He sprinted for the can and snatched it up, and splashed gasoline on the paintings lining the walls. When he was done, he held the can aloft, turning it upside down. Gasoline cascaded across his head and down his shoulders, plastering his blouse to his flabby paunch. He squinted a her with a look of pure malice.

"You'll never get your hands on another piece of my work," he seethed, and with that, he fished a Zippo from his jacket pocket.

He struck it.

"I am a piece of your work," Pamela said, as her first work of art whooped into ironic flames.

THE STRANGER FROM ATAÏR
STORY: DAVID BOLLER
ART: HOUSE 92
NEXT ENTERING
DELAMAR
ARIZONA
ELEVATION 3821
FOUNDED 1878
DRIVE CAREFULLY
Welcome to Delamar
ARIZONA
FINALLY HOME!
GREYHOUND
DELAMAR DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE ...
McDonald's
BILLIONS & BILLIONS SERVED
GREYHOUND
CHANGED A LOT.
SPEED LIMIT 30
MAYBE I'LL EVEN MEET SOME OLD FRIENDS.
Water Falls MOTEL
I WONDER IF THEY'LL RECOGNIZE ME AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?

WOW, THIS STORE WAS ALREADY HERE WHEN I WAS A KID.
I LOVED TO PLAY WITH THESE INDIAN DOLLS.
NAVAJO TRADIN POST IN
I WONDER IF HE STILL HAS THEM?
THERE THEY ARE!
CRASH
OH!
?
I AM... UHH...
SORRY!
ARE YOU BLIND OR WHAT?
YOU LOOK VERY FAMILIAR...
I THINK...
KATHRIN?
ONE WAY
KEVIN!

YOU WERE GONE FOR A LONG TIME, KEVIN.
KEVIN?!?
KEVIN, YOU... YOU'RE BACK.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE...
THE GODS OF THE WHITE LIGHT DIDN'T HARM YOU.
THAT IS A GOOD SIGN.
THE SHERIFF...
KATHRIN, ARE THESE GUYS BOTHERING YOU?
NO, HARRY! THIS IS... KEVIN! HE'S BACK!
YOU BETTER GET LOST, MEDICINE MAN. AND YOU STRANGER, WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM MY WIFE?
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME.
A LONG TIME? CAN I SEE SOME IDENTIFICATION PLEASE?
I DON'T HAVE ANY.
EXCEL RACHINAS OTTERY RUGS GIFS
Chappy's
McGEE'S
THEN I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO COME WITH ME.
YOU KNOW THAT PEOPLE WITHOUT IDENTIFICATION CAN BE TAKEN IN CUSTODY.
EASY, HARRY. THIS IS KEVIN. THE GUY THAT DISAPPEARED 19 YEARS AGO.
LET'S GO TO MY PARENT'S HOUSE. THEY'LL CONFIRM MY IDENTITY.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN. NOT?
HEY... FINE WITH ME.
3

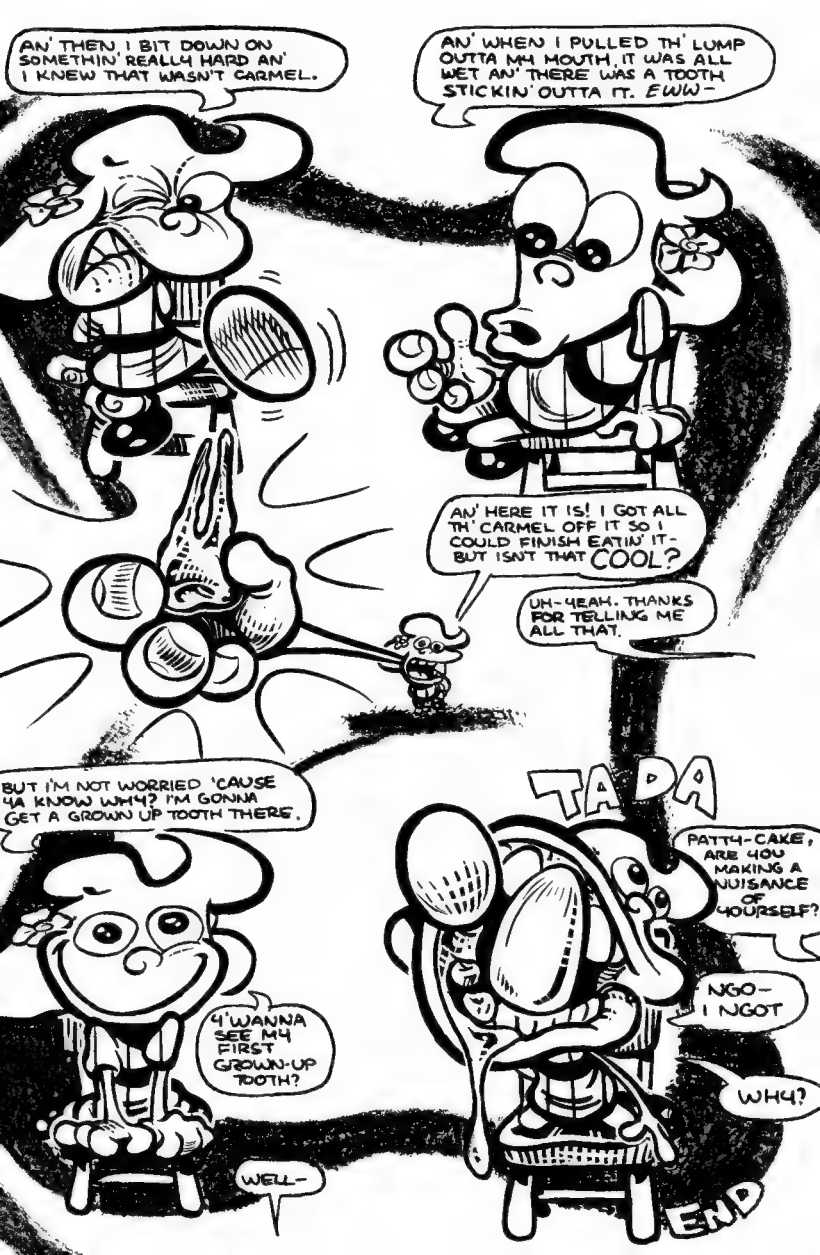
ARIZONA
85
SORRY, SHERIFF. BUT I DON'T KNOW THIS YOUNG MAN.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER YOUR OWN SON? WE USED TO PLAY TOGETHER WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN.
KATHRIN!
WE DON'T HAVE A SON ANYMORE. HE DIED 19 YEARS AGO.
BUT, DAD.. MOM ...
ANYBODY CAN PRETEND TO BE OUR SON.
MOM, TELL HIM! YOU REMEMBER ME, DON'T YOU? ARE YOU NOT HAPPY?
I'M BACK AND I'D LIKE TO LIVE IN DELMAR AGAIN.
MAYBE I COULD EVEN STAY WITH YOU UNTIL I FIND WORK AND A PLACE BY MYSELF.
GO TO HELL, I'M POSTER!
DADDY!
KEVIN
4

BUT, DAD!
SETTLE DOWN, ED.
GET OUT...
POOR KID. NO JOB, NO HOME AND NO PARENTS. HE'D...
OH, KEVIN, IS THIS REALLY YOU?
...BE BETTER OFF TO JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.
MOTHER...
SCRAC
THAT WAS A BIG MISTAKE TO HARASS MY WIFE. YOU CAN SEE THAT SHE DOESN'T FEEL WELL...
KLAC
GOD!
DAD, PLEASE BE RATIONAL!
STRANGER, GO BACK TO...

KRAAA

PATTY CAKE
"THAT'S THE NEWS"
I LOST A TOOTH T'DAY.
OH-YOU DID? UM-HOW ABOUT THAT. YESSIR.
BUT IT WAS JUS' A BABY TOOTH, SO IT WAS GONNA COME OUT EVEN IF IT DIDN'T COME OUT T'DAY.
UHH-HEE?
YES, I SEE. WELL, THAT'S — UH — SURE EXCITING. WOW. HEH-HEH.
AH-HAH.

U'WANNA HEAR HOW IT CAME OUT? IT'S A REAL FUNNY THING.
I WAS EATIN' A BAG O' CARMELS AN' I—
PATTY-CAKE! PUT YOUR DRESS DOWN
OH-YEAH-SUUURE.
I'M JUS' TELLIN' ABOUT HOW MY TOOTH CAME OUT 'CAUSE I WAS EATIN'—
JUST SIT UP STRAIGHT AND KEEP YOUR DRESS DOWN. NOBODY WANTS TO SEE THAT-
SO ANYWAY I GET LIKE NINE OF 'EM ALL IN MY MOUTH AT TH' SAME TIME AN' I'M EATIN' 'EM AN' THEY BECOME ALL ONE BIG PIECE THAT'S LIKE A BIG LUMP AN' IT'S HARD TO EVEN CLOSE MY MOUTH IT'S SO BIG AN' I GET IT TO THE BACK O' MY MOUTH SO I CAN REALLY CHEW ON IT — AN' IT'S STICKY —
YEAH?
REALLY!
I SEE
NO FOOLIN'
UH-HUH-
WOW.
IMAGINE
OH?
SAY-
SURE
HOW ABOUT THAT-


AN' THEN I BIT DOWN ON SOMETHIN' REALLY HARD AN' I KNEW THAT WASN'T CARMEL.
AN' WHEN I PULLED TH' LUMP OUTTA MY MOUTH, IT WAS ALL WET AN' THERE WAS A TOOTH STICKIN' OUTTA IT. EWW-
AN' HERE IT IS! I GOT ALL TH' CARMEL OFF IT SO I COULD FINISH EATIN' IT- BUT ISN'T THAT COOL?
UH-YEAH. THANKS FOR TELLING ME ALL THAT.
BUT I'M NOT WORRIED 'CAUSE YA KNOW WHY? I'M GONNA GET A GROWN UP TOOTH THERE.
TA DA
PATTY-CAKE, ARE YOU MAKING A NUISANCE OF YOURSELF?
NGO- I NGOT
WHY?
Y'WANNA SEE MY FIRST GROWN-UP TOOTH?
WELL-
END

PLEASANT VALLEY SUNDAYS

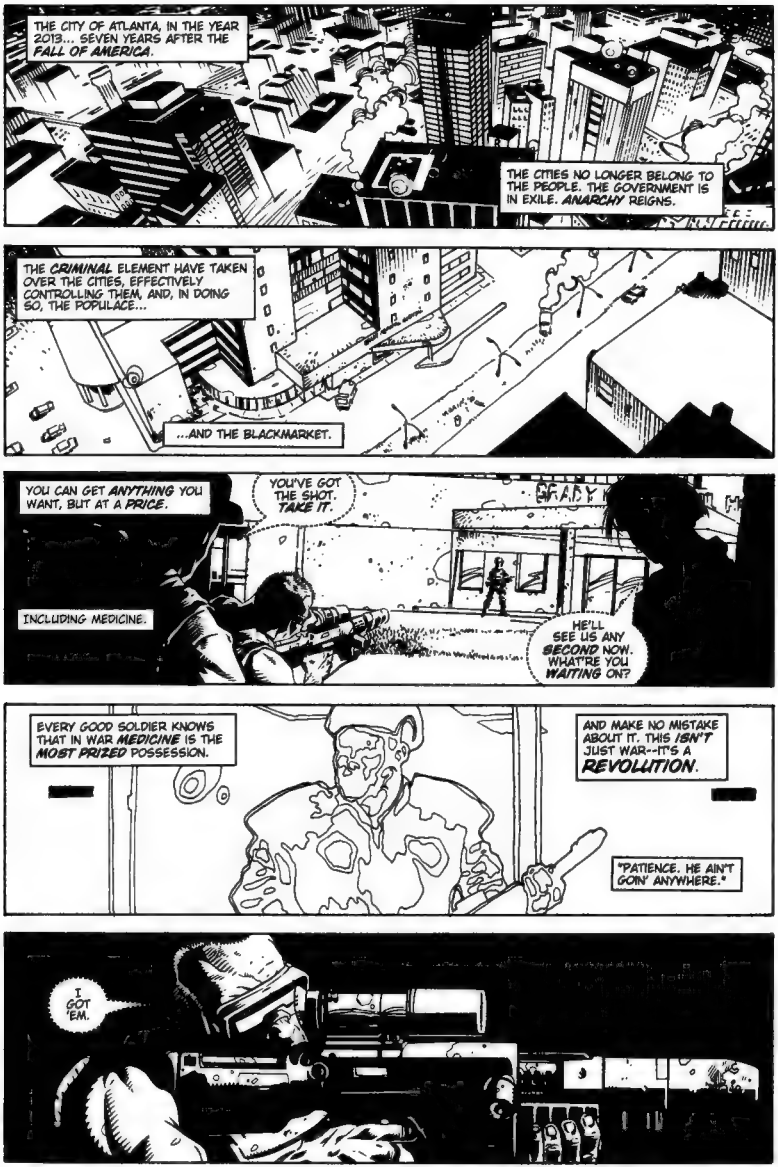
AN EARLY SUMMER'S MORNING IN PLEASANT VALLEY. THERE'S RAIN IN THE FORECAST AND MURDER IN THE AIR...
I'VE JUST GOT TO PUT THIS IN THE TRUNK, SLATE!
HURRY UP, WILL YA, RINA! I HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY!
?
WELL?
WHAT WAS THAT?

WORDS: CHRIS KEMP.
PICTURES: MICHAEL CHERKAS.

SHORTLY...
WOULD YOU MIND TURNING THAT DOWN? I HATE ALANIS MORRISETTE!
HEY, SHE SINGS ABOUT LIFE! SOMETHING YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT!
GGG
GO TO HELL!
...

SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU, DOLL?
N-NO...NO. NOTHING.
I-I GUESS I'M NOT MYSELF TODAY.
AND THE DAY'S JUST STARTING.
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
HMMM?
HOTARU

PULL IN HERE. I NEED TO USE THE REST ROOM.
GAS
?
C'MON! C'MON! PICK UP, ALREADY!
WHAT?
I-IT'S ME! I KNOW WHERE STONE IS! HE'S— GASP!
WHO IS RINA TALKING TO? WHAT IS IN THE TRUNK? DOES RINA STILL HAVE TO USE THE REST ROOM? DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO SAN JOSE? TUNE IN TO THE NEXT EPISODE FOR THESE ANSWERS AND MORE!
... CONTINUED...

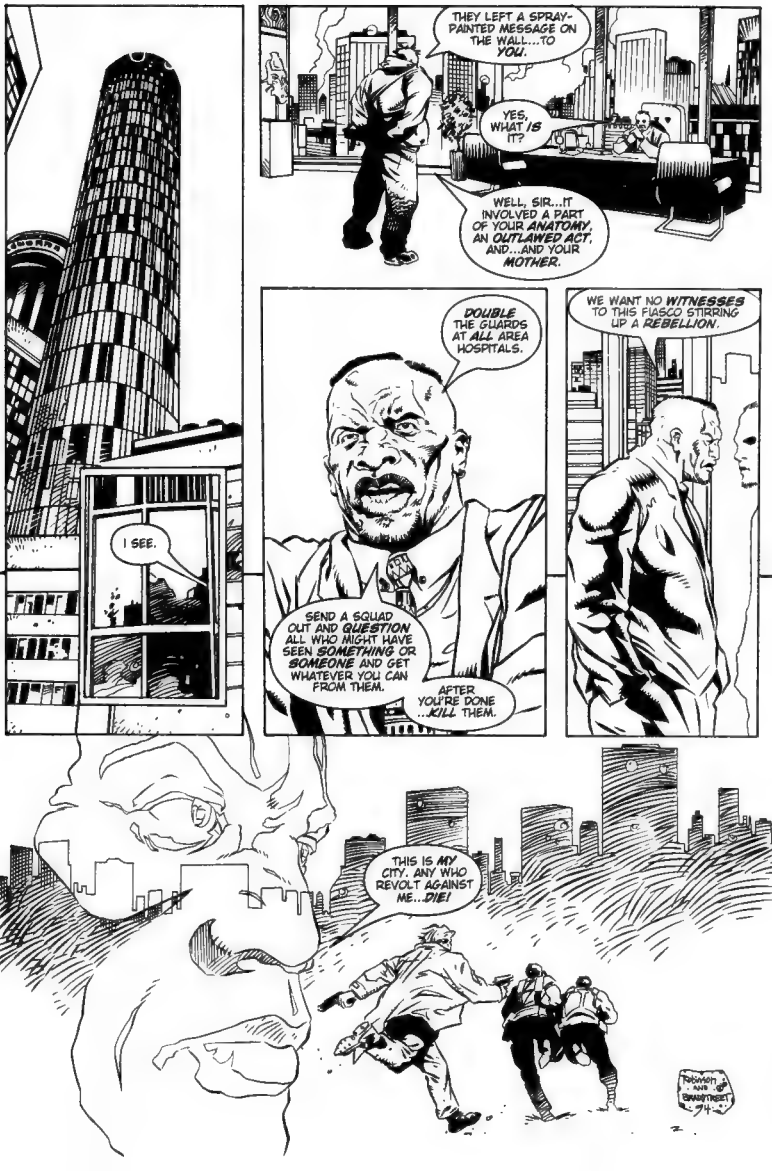

THE CITY OF ATLANTA, IN THE YEAR 2013... SEVEN YEARS AFTER THE FALL OF AMERICA.
THE CITIES NO LONGER BELONG TO THE PEOPLE. THE GOVERNMENT IS IN EXILE. ANARCHY REIGNS.
THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT HAVE TAKEN OVER THE CITIES, EFFECTIVELY CONTROLLING THEM, AND, IN DOING SO, THE POPULACE...
...AND THE BLACKMARKET.
YOU CAN GET ANYTHING YOU WANT, BUT AT A PRICE.
INCLUDING MEDICINE.
YOU'VE GOT THE SHOT. TAKE IT.
HE'LL SEE US ANY SECOND NOW. WHAT'RE YOU WAITING ON?
EVERY GOOD SOLDIER KNOWS THAT IN WAR MEDICINE IS THE MOST PRIZED POSSESSION.
AND MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT. THIS ISN'T JUST WAR--IT'S A REVOLUTION.
"PATIENCE. HE AIN'T GOIN' ANYWHERE."
I GOT 'EM.

nnnnn
CHOK
LET'S GO.
EMERGENCY
NOW!

CRAAAASSSSH!!!
POK
POK
SPLIK

CEASE FIRE.
CLIVE, WHY IN THE HELL DID YOU SHOOT THE JUNKIE?! HE WAS HARMLESS. I SAID JUST ARMED GUARDS!
OOPS.
HELL... HIS LIFE WAS OVER WITH ANYWAY. LIVING ON THAT JUNK. I DID HIM A FAVOR.
IN HERE, RONNIE. I FOUND IT. IT'S LOCKED.
STAND ASIDE, JON.
BINGO!

WE HIT THE MOTHERLOAD.
HURRY! WE'VE ONLY GOT A FEW MINUTES BEFORE REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE!
SO WHO WOULD'VE THUNK IT? PENICILLIN IS STILL THE NUMBER ONE ITEM YOU JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF.
WORTH MORE THAN GOLD NOWADAYS. IF YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON IT, THAT IS. MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE BECOME A PHARMACIST.
SHUT UP AND LET'S GO.
HUMMM. WHY NOT?


I SEE.
THEY LEFT A SPRAY-PAINTED MESSAGE ON THE WALL...TO YOU.
YES, WHAT IS IT?
WELL, SIR...IT INVOLVED A PART OF YOUR ANATOMY, AN OUTLAWED ACT, AND...AND YOUR MOTHER.
DOUBLE THE GUARDS AT ALL AREA HOSPITALS.
SEND A SQUAD OUT AND QUESTION ALL WHO MIGHT HAVE SEEN SOMETHING OR SOMEONE AND GET WHATEVER YOU CAN FROM THEM.
AFTER YOU'RE DONE ..KILL THEM.
WE WANT NO WITNESSES TO THIS FIASCO STIRRING UP A REBELLION.
THIS IS MY CITY. ANY WHO REVOLT AGAINST ME...DIE!
TRIUMPH AND DISASTER '94

IT WAS THAT STATION OF THE NIGHT THAT STILL POINT WHEN THE CARDS THEMSELVES NEED TO REST AND RE-THINK THEIR DESTINIES, AND THE PLAYERS SEIZE THE BRIEF RESPITE WITH THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS OF SOLDIERS OUT OF BATTLE. THE TALK TURNS TO OLD GAMES, AND IT DOESN'T MATTER WHOSE TURN IT IS OR WHETHER YOU'VE HEARD THE STORY BEFORE.
I WAS THERE WHEN JAKE GREELY TRIED TO STAKE A NIGHT IN BED WITH MRS GREELY.
AND NO-ONE WOULD TAKE THE BET, SO WAS I.
REMEMBER CAL THACKER? THOUGHT THE CARDS WUZ TALKIN' TO 'IM?
THERE WUZZA TIME MY MAN SMITTY FAKED THAT FOREMAN FOR TWO MONTH'S PAY WITH TWO OF A KIND HELD HIM TO IT TOO.
Suicide Kings
By Mike Carey & Paul J Holden

NIGHT LIKE THIS...
SAYS FRANK.
THERE'S ONE GAME KEEPS COMIN' BACK TO MY MIND, WHATEVER I MIGHT DO TO KEEP IT OUT.
THIS WAS BEFORE I GOT MY START ON THE DOCKS. I WAS DOING THE CUTTING FLOOR AT A SLAUGHTERHOUSE. IN CHICAGO: BIG SURPRISE.
HELL OF A JOB. USED TO SCRUB MYSELF RAW SATURDAY NIGHT AND I'D STILL HAVE THAT STINK ON ME.

I HAD MY SOUL IN HOCK TO POKER JUST AS MUCH THEN AS NOW, SO I STARTED SNIFFING AROUND FOR A GAME.
PACKERS SAID THE BEST ACTION WAS UPSTAIRS AT CALLAHAN'S TAP. BAR WAS RIGHT UNDERNEATH, SO YOU COULD DRINK HALF YOUR PAY AND THROW THE OTHER HALF AT THE CARDS.
I WAS HAVIN' A LOSIN' TIME OF IT BACK THEN. BUT THERE WAS THIS ONE GUY DESALLE. A DRIVER. THEY CALLED HIM DIESEL.
CAT
FUCK. HE WAS A COLD ONE. HAD THIS GREY SKIN WITH THE VEINS SHOWING. DEAD MAN'S SKIN. AND YELLOW EYES. STARED AT THE CARDS LIKE HE WAS A CAT AND THEY WAS LITTLE BIRDS.

HE COULDN'T LOSE. THE MAN JUST DID NOT KNOW HOW TO LOSE. IF YOU BLUFFED, HE FOUND YOU. IF YOU DIDN'T, HE FOLDED
AND WHEN YOU CALLED HIM, HE ALWAYS HAD JUST WHAT YOU HAD, WITH A LITTLE OVER.
SO ONE NIGHT GREER SAYS TO 'IM
YOU GOT THE LUCK OF THE FRIGGIN' DEVIL.
I DON'T CARE TO HEAR THAT KIND OF TALK.
SAYS DIESEL
ONLY A FOOL CALLS ON THE DEVIL. YOU WANT TO PLAY THE FOOL, YOU CAN FIND YOURSELF SOME OTHER FOOLS TO PLAY WITH.
LAST MAN CALLED ME NAMES WAS WHISTLIN' THROUGH HIS WAZOO SOON AFTER
SAVE YOUR BLUFFS FOR THE TABLE, GREER. I'M NOT INTERESTED.
AH, FUCK IT!
NOW, I'D EXPECTED GREER TO PUSH IT. HE WAS 224 POUNDS, WITH NO FAT, AND I'D SEEN HIM HAUL OFF FOR MUCH LESS.
BUT I GUESS THOSE COLD YELLOW EYES PUT HIM OFF HIS STRIDE.
DEVIL CAN'T TOUCH US IN ANY CASE, DIESEL. WE GOT PACKERS' IMMUNITY, 'CAUSE OF THE SMELL.
FUNNY 'CAUSE THEY ALWAYS BROUGHT OUT THE WORST IN ME.

SO A FEW DAYS LATER I'M CHANGIN' INTO MY WHITES AND I SEE DIESEL OPEN UP HIS LOCKER.
THE LOCKERS WAS ALL PAINTED GREEN - BUT HIS WAS WHITE INSIDE. THEN I SEE WHY.
HE'S GOT THE LOCKER KIND OF WALLPAPERED. ONLY IT'S PAGES. PAGES FROM A BOOK, SO CLOSE THEY'RE OVERLAPPING.
YOU GOTTA PROBLEM, FRANK?
NOT ME, DIESEL. ONLY YOU KNOW I DON'T READ MUCH - I JUST LIKE TO LOOK AT THE PICTURES.
THERE'S PLACES THE DEVIL CAN'T SEE, FRANK. THE GOOD BOOK IS LIKE A SHARP STICK IN HIS EYE, BLINDING HIM.
AND THOU SHALT WEAR THESE WORDS AS A SIGN UPON THY HAND AND UPON THE DOORPOSTS OF THY HOUSE
YOU RECKON DIESEL IS CRAZY?
GOTTA BE. MAN DON'T DO A THREE-DAY HAUL WITHOUT SLEEPIN' IF HE'S GOT ALL HIS BRAINS IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
YEAH, AND HE DON'T LINE HIS JACKET WITH JESUS, EITHER. I MEAN, OKAY EVERYONES GOTTA RIGHT TO...
HEY FRANK! FRANK CASTOR!

JEM, YOU FRIGGIN' LITTLE SPARROWFART! YOU WORKING CHICAGO NOW?
WELL, I WAS TRYING OUT FOR KING LEAR OVER AT THE ORCHESTRA HALL. DIDN'T COME TO ANYTHING, THOUGH.
IF YOU'RE WONDERING HOW COME I WAS FRIENDS WITH AN ACTOR, YOU DON'T KNOW ACTORS. MOST OF 'EM REACH A TIME WHEN THEY'LL DO ANY KIND OF WORK TO KEEP FROM STARVING. JEM AND ME WORKED A LINE TOGETHER IN MICHIGAN WAY BACK.
SO HOW COME YOU'RE STILL STINKIN' UP THIS NEIGHBORHOOD? I THOUGHT IF YOU HAD ANY HANGIN' AROUND TO DO YOU DID IT BACK EAST.
YEAH, BUT DONNA, SHE'S PREGNANT. DUE IN TWO MONTHS. WE DECIDED SHE'D LAY IN AT THE FREE.
LOTS OF FOLKS DOES, I HEAR.
JEM, A GUY LIKE YOU NEEDS TO KEEP HIS HAND IN.
THERE'S THIS GUY WE PLAY POKER WITH, CRAZY. HE THINKS THE DEVIL'S TRAILIN' HIM LIKE A DIVORCE LAWYER.
I'D SURE LIKE TO SEE THE DEVIL SIT DOWN AND OFFER HIM A GAME.
I DON'T GET IT.
SURE YOU DO. YOU COULD DO IT LIKE ROBERT DE NIRO IN ANGEL HEART DRESS FANCY PUT ON THE VOICE...
CHRIST, DIESEL'D CRAP HIS PANTS FOR SURE.
I DON'T KNOW A GODDAM THING ABOUT POKER.
WHO CARES? YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE TO PLAY. AND IF YOU DO I CAN DEAL YOU A PAT HAND.
JEM TOOK A BIT MORE PERSUADING BUT I WASN'T LETTING THIS ONE GO. IT WAS TOO GOOD A JOKE TO MISS - ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN IT WAS A HUNDRED AND FUCKING TWELVE.
AND I WAS AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD.

SO IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT. WE'RE ALL THERE, Y'KNOW? IT'S AROUND MIDNIGHT AND EVERYBODY'S RELAXING INTO IT. LONG WAY TO GO YET.
PAIR OF SEVENS, STILL OUT THERE
I.M. I'M IN FOR TWO BUCKS
THEN JEM MADE HIS ENTRANCE, DEAD ON THE HOUR.
HEARD A MAN COULD PLAY POKER HERE. IS THAT TRUE?
HE LOOKED THE PART ALRIGHT - BY LUCIFER OUT OF DIXIE.
SURE. WHY NOT?
SAYS STAMP. HE'S IN ON THE JOKE. THEY ALL ARE.
LET ME DUST OFF A CHAIR FOR YOU.
WHAT GAME DO YOU GENTLEMEN PLAY?
FIVE CARD STUD. ONE IN THE HOLE. TWO BUCKS APIECE. TO BUY IN. YOU GOOD FOR THIS?
I BELIEVE SO.
NOW MOST OF THAT WAD WAS JUST THE TRIBUNE CUT UP SMALL, BUT THAT AIN'T THE POINT. JEM KNEW THE VALUE OF GOOD PROPS
AND A GOOD OPENING LINE.
SETTLE DOWN FOR A LONG HAUL, MY FRIENDS.
MORNING'S GOING TO BE DELAYED AWHILE.

THIS HAS BEEN ENTERTAINING MY FRIENDS - BUT IN POKER IT'S THE STAKES THAT MAKE THE GAME. WOULD ANYONE CARE TO RAISE THEM?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
CAT
YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL, HENRY PETER DESALLE.
CAT

THAT AIN'T A BET. AGAINST WHAT? MY SOUL. AGAINST WHAT?
AGAINST WHATEVER, YOU NAME THE STAKE. I'LL MEET YOU.
CAT
OKAY. I'LL NAME IT ONLY I'LL NAME IT AFTERWARDS.
I'M SORRY?
I'LL WRITE YOUR STAKE ON A PIECE OF PAPER. YOU CAN READ IT AFTER THE HAND - IF YOU LOSE.
YOU SAID YOU'D MEET ANY STAKE.
WELL. DIDN'T YOU? YOU SAID THAT.
WELL, THAT'S...
YEAH, I GUESS IT'S FAIR. ANYONE GOT A PEN?
GODDAM GODDAM GODDAM
HOLD ON TO THIS, FRANK. AND SOMEONE DEAL US SOME FRIGGIN' CARDS.

OKAY. YOU'RE CALLING IT, DIESEL. ONE DOWN AND ONE UP.
ER.. GUESS I MIGHT AS WELL DEAL ALL THE REST STRAIGHT OUT?
ONE AT A TIME.
ONE AT A TIME.
ONE FOR YOU, DIESEL.
AND ONE FOR YOU, MISTER WHATEVER.
PAULEY
CAT
YEAH, DIESEL?
YOU DEAL ME ONE MORE CARD FROM THE BOTTOM, YOU WON'T BE LIVIN' YOUR HAND AGAIN. EVER.

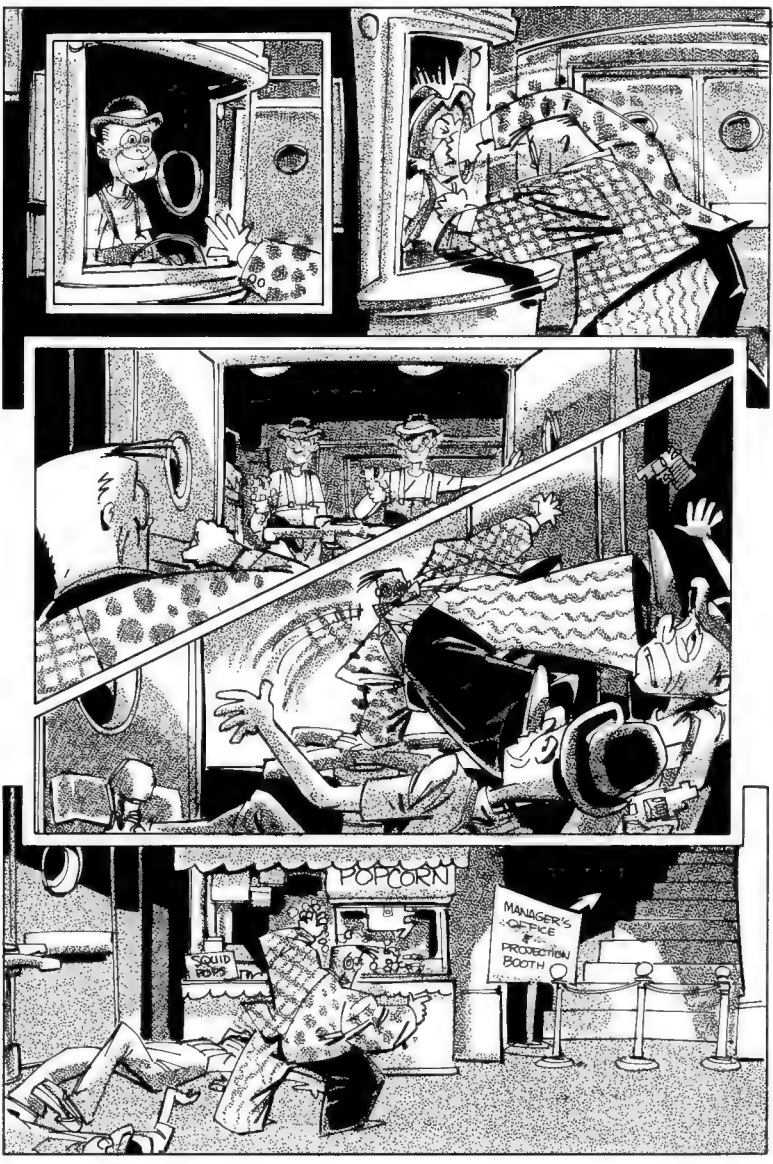
FINE. FINE. WHATEVER YOU SAY. DIESEL.
THIS IS A FUCK OF A WAY TO SPEND A SATURDAY NIGHT. Y'KNOW?
YOU GOT A SUICIDE KING.
BUT THE MAN'S TWO QUEENS ARE STILL OUT THERE.
AND HERE COMES THE LATE NEWS.

WELL, GIVE IT A NAME, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.
FULL HOUSE. QUEEN'S OVER EIGHTS
CAT
I WIN.
WITH THREE OF A KIND? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

SUICIDE KINGS IS WILD, JEM.
EXACTLY. I GOT FOUR TENS.
CAT
YOU GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT HELL, MR DEVIL. BUT THEN YOU GOT A LONG TIME TO LEARN IT IN.
BOYS. WE'LL PICK UP THIS GAME ANOTHER TIME.
CHRIST, THAT MAN IS CRAZIER THAN A SHITHOUSE RAT.
WHAT'S ON THE PAPER, FRANK?
LOOK, JEM. YOU DON'T WANNA TAKE...
WHAT'S ON THE FUCKING PAPER?
YOU
ILD
YOUR UNBORN CHILD

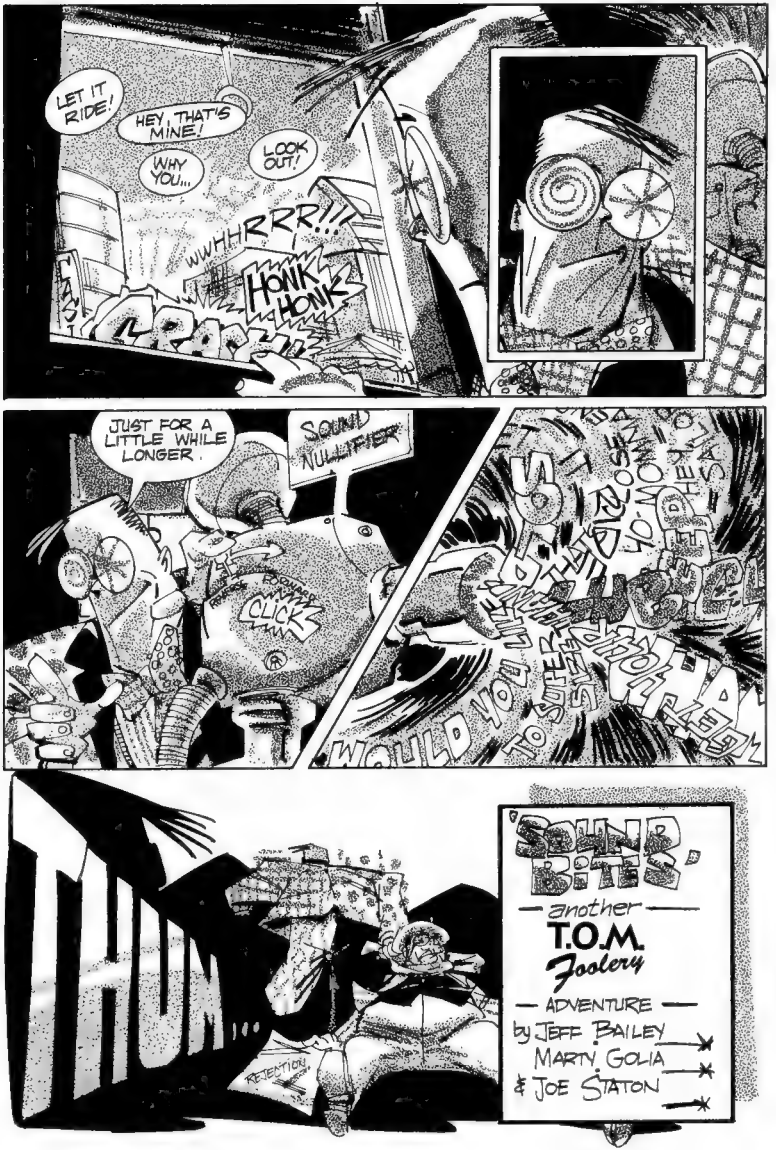
OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD, NO!
JEM, WAIT! I'LL... I'LL COME WITH YOU!
HE RAN LIKE A BAT OUT OF HELL. DIDN'T MATTER. SHE WAS ALREADY AT THE HOSPITAL - IN CASUALTY NOT MATERNITY.
SPONTANEOUS ABORTION. THEY THOUGHT SHE WAS GONNA DIE TOO. SHE BLED SO MUCH.
JEM COME ONTO THE FLOOR NEXT MORNIN'. WENT FOR ME LIKE SOME KIND OF FUCKING ANIMAL. GIVE ME THIS EYE AND A COUPLE OF BUSTED RIBS, WITH ALL THE GUYS JUST STANDING THERE AND WATCHING LIKE I WAS A STRANGER.
COUPLE OF GUYS WHO WEREN'T AT THE TABLE THAT NIGHT COME AND TOLD ME A FEW DAYS LATER, DIESEL WAS GONE. DIDN'T EVEN SHOW UP FOR HIS BACK PAY.
GUESS I SHOULD'VE FIGURED THAT PART AT LEAST.
NO REASON WHY A GOOD MAN WOULD BE SCARED OF THE DEVIL GRABBING AT HIS ASS. GOOD MAN GOT NOTHING TO LOSE.
WHOSE DEAL IS IT, ANYWAY?
UMM... YOURS?
THEN LET'S PLAY.

BOARDWALK TIMES
CRAZED INVENTOR SILENCES BOARDWALK CITY!
SOUND WAVES HELD HOSTAGE
"He's not a bad guy" he's just under a lot of pressure"
FOUR FLUSH
taffy
JOHN TESH CONCERT CANCELLED!
marceau marceau
SOLD OUT
MILLION DOLLARS DEMANDED! CITY COUNCIL SAYS WE'RE WILLING TO TALK
NEWS
POLICE AT A LOSS FOR LEADS
FAMOUS LANDMARKS OF BOARDWALK CITY
SILENT MOVIE THEATER MUSEUM


POPCORN
SQUID POPS
MANAGER'S OFFICE & PROJECTION BOOTH

NO!
NO!
NO
Worldwide Pictures
Don't bother us again!
Mourner Bros. Studios
REJECTED!
NEXT SILENT
SOUND NULLIFIER
NO!!!
REVERSE
FORWARD
SOUND NULLIFIER

SIX FOR A BUCK!
BET ON IT!
I'LL BE BEEGH!
STARTING SOON
HEY, SAILOR
COMPUTER!
WHEEL!
TH
AWWP!


LET IT RIDE!
HEY, THAT'S MINE!
WHY YOU...
LOOK OUT!
WWHHRRR!!!
HONK HONK
CRASH
JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER.
SOUND NULLIFIER
BOOMING VOICE
CLICK
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING REALLY SCARY?
THUD
REJEMION!
SOUND BITES
another
T.O.M. Foolery
ADVENTURE
by JEFF BAILEY
MARTY GOLIA
& JOE STATON

the seventies, the projects and me.

PROJECT high

I never liked the streets of Savannah at night.

... even the trees were spooky.

Kentucky fried chicken blues

Our mom didn't share our fear, though. She'd send us on errands, despite our whining. It was usually for cigarettes.

One time our evil stepfather, Blackie, made us go get some Kentucky fried chicken.

I was hoping I was scared for no good reason.

HEY MAN-HOL' UP!
ohh man...
Maybe if we give 'em some, they'll!-
NO WAY!
My younger brother, Steve, didn't seem too smart in these things.
HOW ABOUT LETTIN' ME HOL' SOME CHICKEN?
OK, but just one piece.
Yeah! jus' one.
STUPID!
Any fool could've seen what was gonna happen...
LET'S GO!
Hey!
Thanks alot, cracker!
...'course I was no fool.
Quiet down- don't make 'em come back!
C'MON BACK, YOU CHICKENSHIT NIGGERS!
C'MON BACK AND FIGHT!
Sometimes I thought my brother was, though.
Nah, I was no fool.
Great job! What are we gonna tell Blackie, huh?
A coward, though, I had that one down.
VonMeyer94

Project High editorial

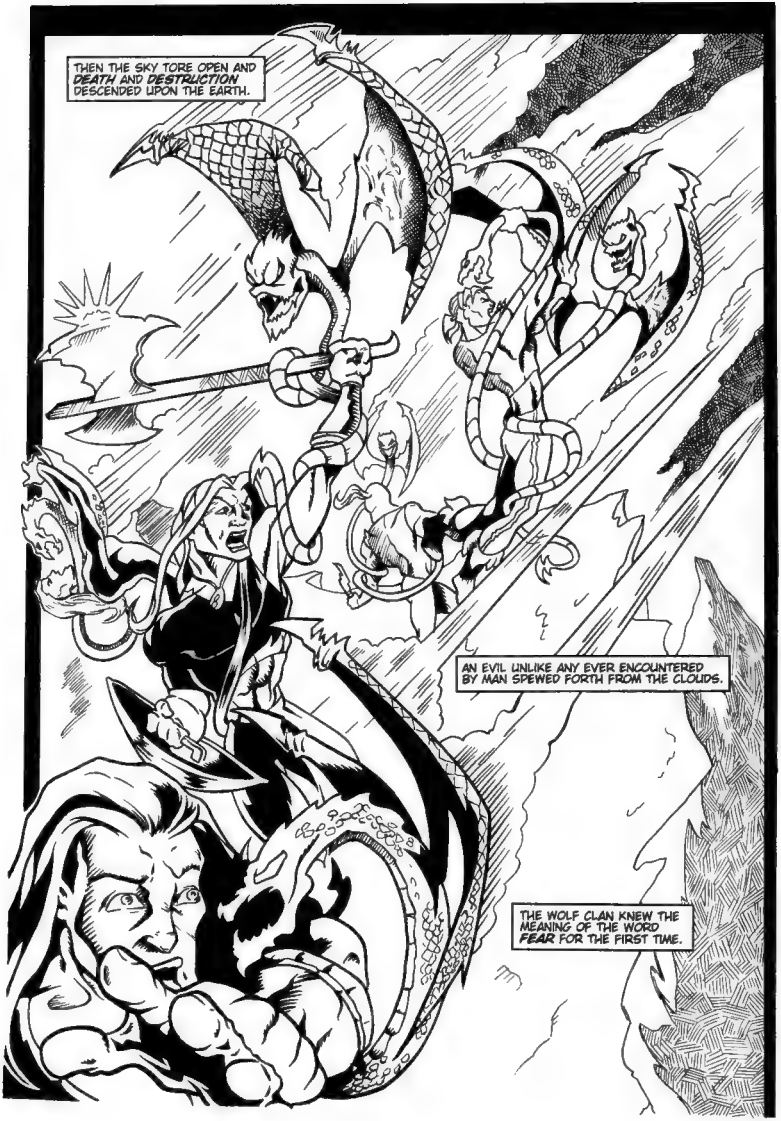
Ken Meyer, Jr.

There are many words in the English language that are ugly, but "Nigger" is, to my mind, one of the ugliest. It comes from an ignorant, evil and backward part of our history. But you can't get rid of evil by ignoring it and hoping it will go away. You have to expose it and hopefully, by doing so, take away its power.

Now, of course, I'm not trying to do all that in this one installment of my little series, "Project High." I'm just telling it like it is (or in this case, was). This IS an autobiographical strip after all, and I think it would be wrong to change crucial things just to stem the risk of offending someone. The strip is drawn in a cartoony manner, though, and I'm afraid this might trivialize some of the content, so I wrote this explanation to accompany this installment. Words like this will creep into the strip from time to time, because that was what it was like in Savannah in the early seventies when I lived there. It was busing. It was integration. It was bigotry. It was a fact of life.

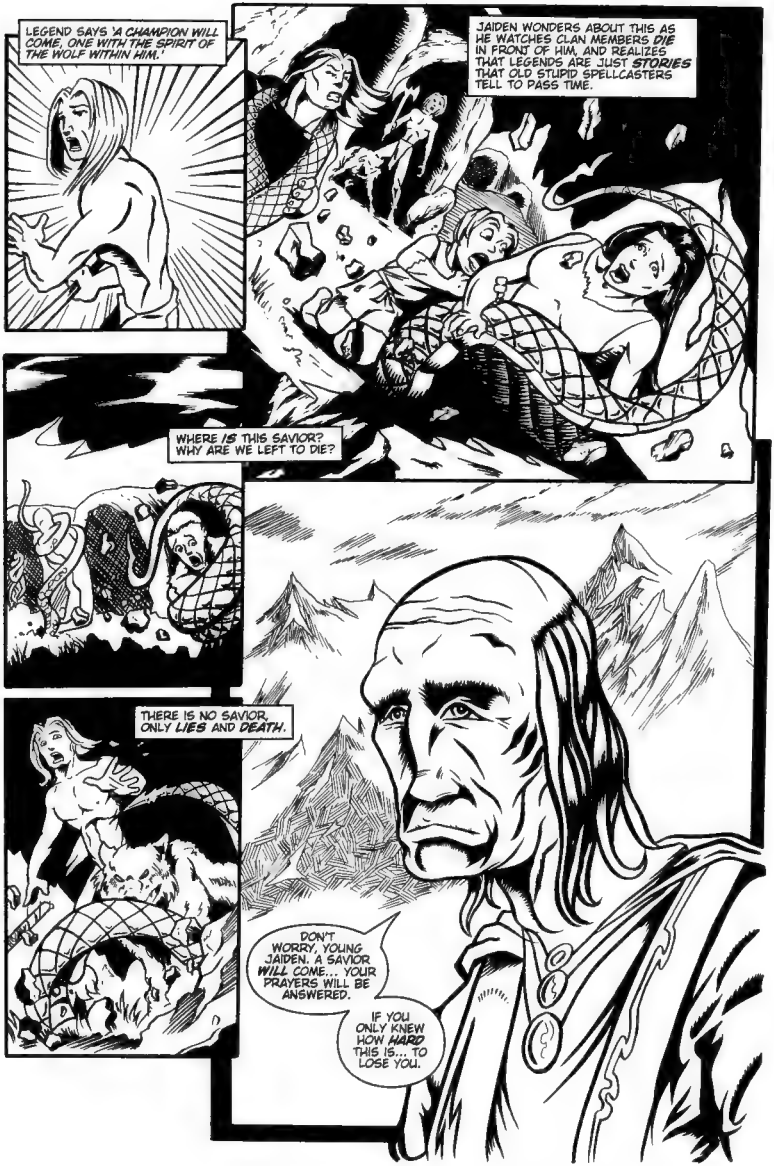
I know. I lived it.

THE STORMS WERE HEADED TOWARD THE VILLAGE. AN EVIL THAT HAD BEEN TRAPPED FOR CENTURIES HAD BEEN RELEASED, AND NOTHING DARE STAND IN ITS WAY.
NOTHING THAT IS EXCEPT JARED AND HIS WOLF CLAN.
JAIDEN
AN UNEASY CHILL TICKLED THEIR SPINES AS THE ICY WIND NUMBED THEIR SOULS.
THE FIVE NOBLE WARRIORS STOOD STRONG AS THE EYE OF THE STORM LOOKED DOWN UPON THEM FORE-CASTING CERTAIN DEATH.


THEN THE SKY TORE OPEN AND *DEATH* AND *DESTRUCTION* DESCENDED UPON THE EARTH.
AN EVIL UNLIKE ANY EVER ENCOUNTERED BY MAN SPEWED FORTH FROM THE CLOUDS.
THE WOLF CLAN KNEW THE MEANING OF THE WORD *FEAR* FOR THE FIRST TIME.

AS JARED HUNG ONTO THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF HIS NOW FADING LIFE, HE THOUGHT OF HIS BROTHER, JAIDEN, AND HOW HE PRAYED THE FUTURE OF THE CLAN WOULD SOMEHOW BE PROTECTED FROM THE TRAGEDY ABOUT TO BEFALL THEM ALL.
JAIDEN WAS INDEED THE FUTURE OF THE CLAN, BUT THAT WASN'T IMPORTANT NOW... AT LEAST NOT TO JAIDEN.
HE KNEW NOT THAT HIS BROTHER NEARED DEATH, NOR THAT HE WAS THE CLAN'S SOLE HOPE.
HE KNEW THE COMPANY OF HIS WOLF, TAL, AND THE WHIMSICAL PLEASURES OF YOUTH.
C'MON, TAL. LET GO. OKAY. YOU WIN...
"...WHAT?"

HE KNEW WHAT IT MEANT. THE STORM WAS GETTING CLOSE, HIS BROTHER AND THE REST HAD *FAILED*. HE ONLY PRAYED THEY WERE ALIVE. THOSE PRAYERS WENT UNANSWERED WHEN HIS EYES FOCUSED ON HIS BROTHER'S *LIFELESS* BODY BEING HELD LIKE SOME DISGUSTING TROPHY. JAIDEN *KNEW* THAT *DEATH* HAD COME TO CLAIM THEM ALL.


LEGEND SAYS 'A CHAMPION WILL COME, ONE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE WOLF WITHIN HIM.'
JAIDEN WONDERS ABOUT THIS AS HE WATCHES CLAN MEMBERS DIE IN FRONT OF HIM, AND REALIZES THAT LEGENDS ARE JUST STORIES THAT OLD STUPID SPELLCASTERS TELL TO PASS TIME.
WHERE IS THIS SAVIOR? WHY ARE WE LEFT TO DIE?
THERE IS NO SAVIOR, ONLY LIES AND DEATH.
DON'T WORRY, YOUNG JAIDEN. A SAVIOR WILL COME... YOUR PRAYERS WILL BE ANSWERED.
IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW HARD THIS IS... TO LOSE YOU.

THE TIME *WILL* COME. WITH DEATH COMES UNDERSTANDING.
I CAN ONLY *HOPE* YOU SOMEDAY ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT *HAD* TO BE THIS WAY.
RISE, YOUNG ONE. RISE AND TAKE ON THE *MANTLE* THAT WAS *PREDESTINED* FOR YOU.
YOU ARE THE *ONE* OF WHICH THE LEGENDS SPEAK.
"FOR IT IS WRITTEN THAT A *WARRIOR* SHALL *COME* TO *RID* THIS REALM OF THE *UNHOLY EVIL* THAT HAS COME FORTH TO CLAIM OUR LAND."

"SO IT IS WRITTEN IN THE SCROLLS, SO IT SHALL BE."
"RISE, JAIDEN, SPIRIT OF THE WARRIOR."
"RISE, SAVIOR."
THE BEGINNING.

BACK iSSUES

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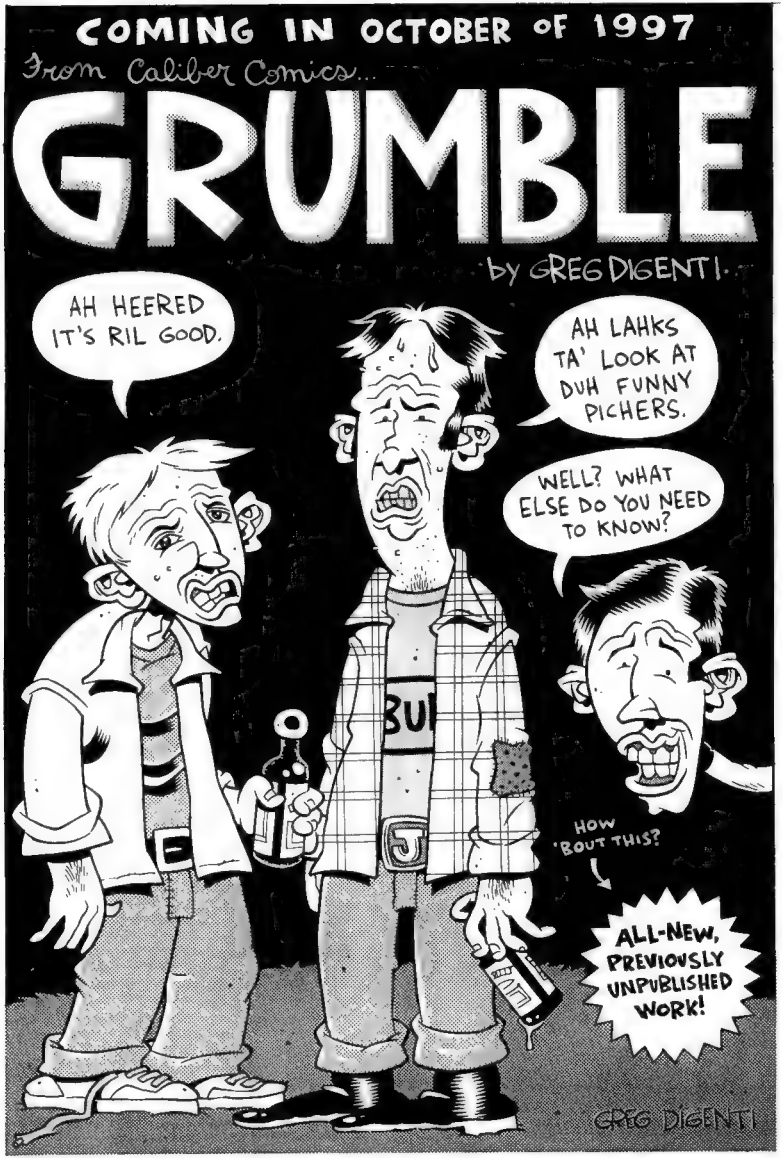
COMING IN OCTOBER OF 1997
From Caliber Comics...
GRUMBLE
by GREG DIGENTI
AH HEERED IT'S RIL GOOD.
AH LAHKS TA' LOOK AT DUH FUNNY PICHERS.
WELL? WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?
HOW 'BOUT THIS?
ALL-NEW, PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED WORK!
GREG DIGENTI

ISSUE FIFTY

NEGATIVE BURN 50

CREATORS INCLUDE

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JAMES ROBINSON
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MIKE WIERINGO
BRIAN BOLLAND
DAVE JOHNSON
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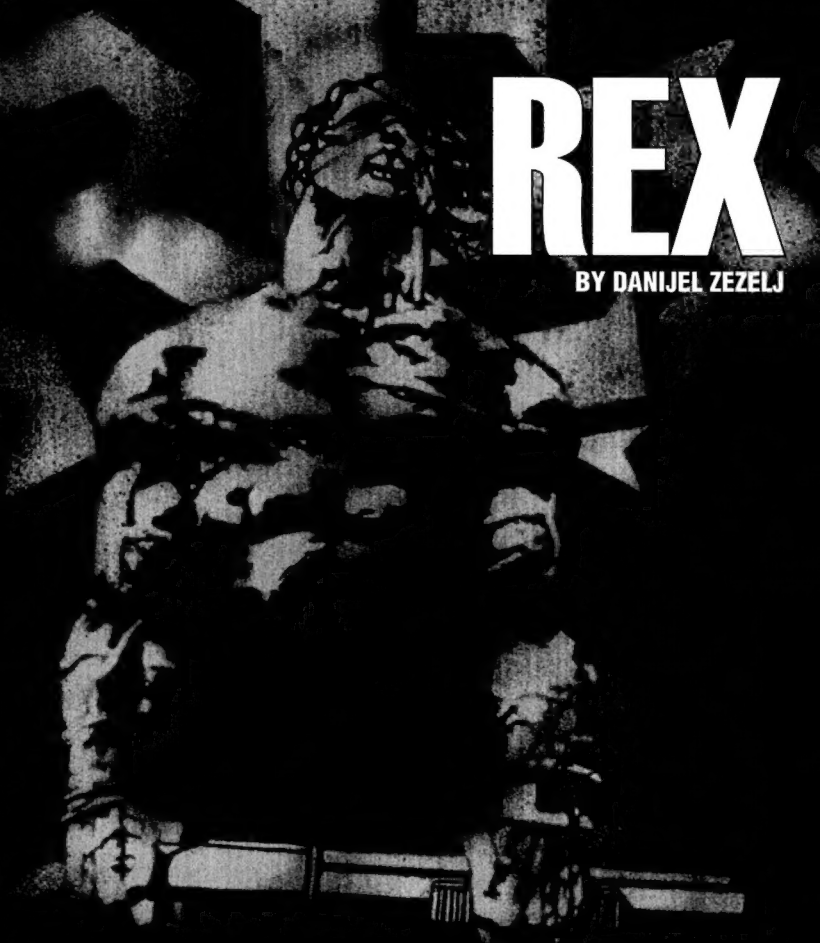

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE SAMPLE ART FROM REX...

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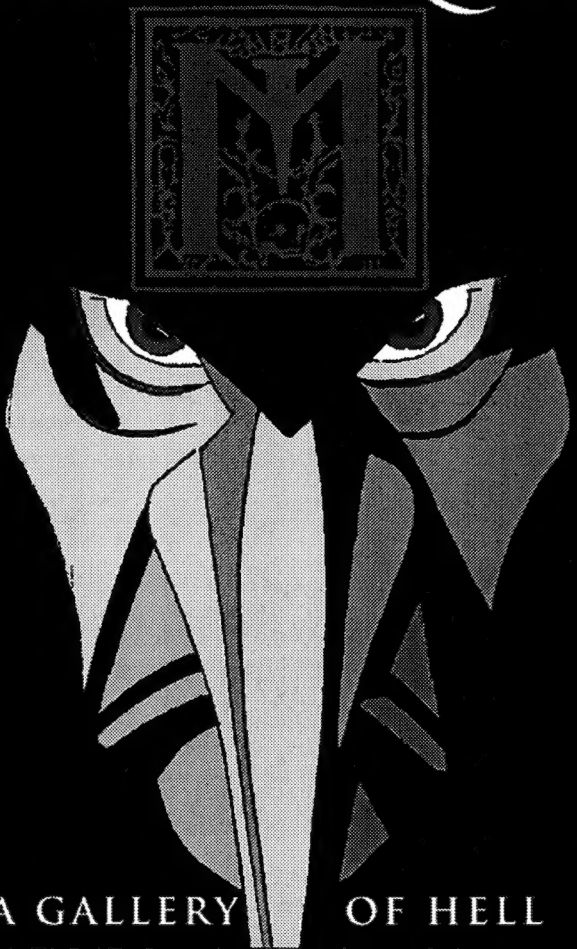
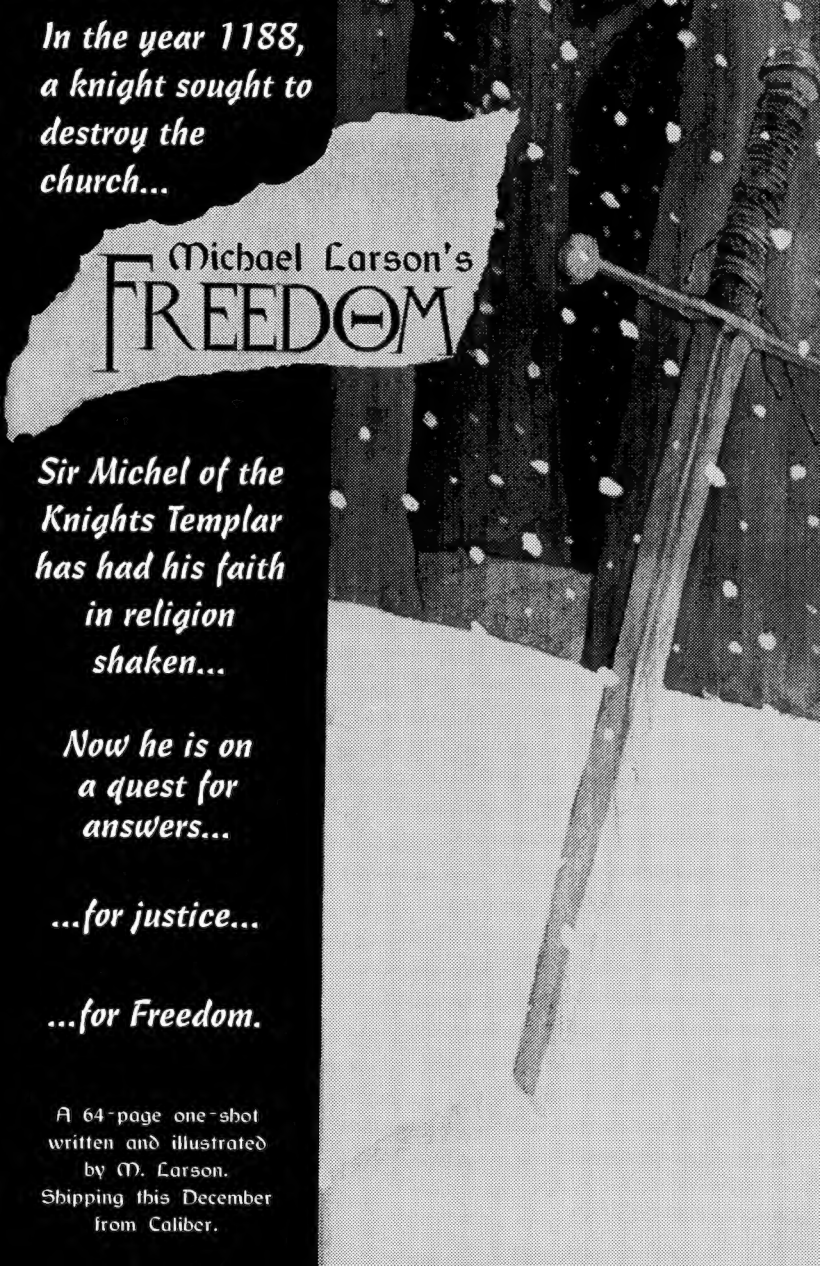


A GALLERY OF HELL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